

born thieves and liars, so early did they display these most undesirable traits of character; yet we have lived to see them become noble men and women, and ornaments to society. We must confess they had wise, affectionate parents. Whatever else you may be compelled by your circumstances in life to deny your child, give it what it most values—plenty of love.

The Sunday School

LESSON FOR JULY 10

BY THE EDITOR

Elijah the Prophet.—I King 17:1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT: And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord.—I Kings 17:16.

LESSON THOUGHT: God will care for those who trust him and do his bidding.

Introductory Notes

This lesson opens with the sudden appearance of Elijah the prophet, and for a while we have to do with this great man of God. During the period he prophesied the history of Israel is so connected with his life that the one can not be profitably studied without the study of the other. The lives of great men become in part the lives of the nations to which they belong. We must study the two together.

The condition of Israel may be summed up as follows: (1) Politically there was a measure of prosperity under the reign of Ahab. He was a good worldly general, and adopted some wise policies, tho wise only from a worldly standpoint. (2) Spiritually it was the blackest night of Israel's darkness. The people were plunged in the blasphemous and shameless rites of idolatry. The public worship of Jehovah was abolished, and while there were yet 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, yet these had to worship the true God secretly. The schools of the prophets were destroyed, their teachers persecuted to death. It was the one aim of Jezebel to extirpate the religion of Jehovah, and she was succeeding fairly well. The causes of this terrible religious declension were, (1) The sin of Jeroboam, (2) Ahab's marriage with Jezebel, daughter of the heathen king and priest of the Zidonians.

Meaning of the Text

1. Practically we know nothing of Elijah's life until he appears suddenly in the narrative. He probably lived much apart from men. The name is significant, "Jehovah is my God." That was the creed of his life. He is called the "Tishbite" probably from the place of his birth, Tishbe. He was not a native of Gilead, but dwelt there for a time. Ahab was the king, and Elijah comes suddenly into his presence, announces his message and is gone again. In Palestine dew takes the place of rain, hence both are withheld. Drought was one of the judgments threatened on disobedience. Deut. 28:23. It lasted three years. James 5:17.

2, 3. Jezebel and Ahab would hold Elijah responsible for the drought and thus seek his life. The brook was a torrent bed, thro which in rainy seasons a strong stream flowed, but in dry weather was without water. The place was in the neighborhood of Elijah's own country.

4. The feeding may have been miraculously done. Some of the ablest interpreters tell us that *raven* might be translated "Arabians," or "Orebites."

5. This was unquestioning obedience and trust.

6. Where they found the food and how they brought it we do not know; we know only the fact, and this is enough for faith.

7. The stream would naturally dry up gradually as the drought progressed, and thus be a severe trial of the prophet's faith.

8, 9. The place was the same as Serepta mentioned in Luke 4:26. It was outside Ahab's dominions, yet not a safe refuge for an enemy of Baal-worship, as it was in the heart of the dominions of Ethbaal, Jezebel's father. God put into the woman's heart to fulfill his purpose; there was no literal command. To ordinary human reason such a source of sustenance would be somewhat precarious, but not any more so than to depend on the ravens for food.

10. Note the unquestioning obedience of Elijah. The woman was very poor as is seen from the fact that she went about picking up bits of wood to make her fire. The request for water probably because he was thirsty, and also to determine whether this was the woman.

11. Her prompt compliance with the stranger's request showed that she was kindly disposed.

12. She recognized Elijah as a worshipper of the true God. The barrenness of her poverty here appears. Having nothing left to eat after this she saw only death for herself and son.

13, 14. She was to prepare the food, but instead of eating it all herself, she was to give him a portion. He promised that she should not want.

15, 16. It was a severe trial of her faith, but it proved her worthiness to entertain the Lord's prophet.

The Lesson Applied

1. *What is in a Name.*—We say there is nothing in a name but that was not the case with Elijah. His entire mission, character and biography are wrapped up in his name. Elijah means, "Jehovah is my God." That was the secret of all Elijah's success as a prophet of God. His only master was his Lord, to whom he was thoroughly consecrated. He believed that God means just what he said when he spoke to him, and so he did not hesitate to do the bidding of the Lord, and do it quickly without asking any questions as to how God's commandments were to be carried out. He trusted God, and God never failed him, neither will he fail any one who puts his trust in him. We need more of the simple faith of Elijah, the faith

that believes, obeys and trusts. We need more of the inspiring power of the old prophet, more of the sense of God's reality. If we believed that God is ours, that we are God's really and truly, we would be a different sort of Christians.

2. *Before the Lord.*—Elijah recognized the divine immanence of God. He said, "the Lord before whom I stand." And as he recognized the presence of God, so he always acted as if in his presence. This is always the result if we really believe that God is everywhere and that we are continually standing before him. If we could but recognize this fact, it would make a better people of us. It would keep us from sin, from wrong doing of all kinds, there would be no secretly taking the advantage of our neighbor. The reason people do not live as they ought to live is that they do not have a realization of the abiding presence of God. The thought of God's presence need not frighten us, rather it should make us bold to do right; it gives hope and courage in time of danger. We are all standing in the presence of God as Elijah did. Let us remember this fact and live accordingly.

3. *God Feeds his People.*—Why should it be considered a strange thing that God fed Elijah? Does he not feed all of us? You reap a harvest, take the grain to the mill and get flour made out of which bread is baked, and then having plenty on the table, perhaps it never occurs to you that God is feeding you. He is tho, as verily as he fed Elijah, the only difference is that he was fed in an unusual way, but no more miraculously than you are being fed. It was the same providence and the same God.

4. *The Brook Dried up.*—It was a trying time for Elijah, for before he went there he might have known that the brook will dry up, but Elijah asked no questions about it, but went and did as the Lord directed him, trusting to him to open a way when the brook failed. This was faith, the kind of faith that overcomes, the kind of faith that all of us need, and must have if we would succeed in God's service.

To Make You Think

1. What do we know of Elijah prior to his appearance in this lesson? 2. Who called him to deliver this message to the king? 3. Where had Elijah obtained power to open and shut the windows of heaven? 4. Was Elijah different from other people? 5. In what sense was he like them? 6. Did Elijah know the brook would go dry after a long drought? 7. Did he have any idea as to what he would do after it went dry? 8. Did he ask any question as to what he should then do? 9. What important lesson does this teach? 10. What does Jesus say about care for the morrow? 11. How did Elijah know when he saw the woman that it was the one to whom God had sent him? 12. How does Elijah here show his unquestioning obedience and his simple trust in God? 13. Was the woman's faith as great as that of Elijah? 14. In what consisted her faith? 15.